A

# SERMON

*PREACHED AT THE CATHEDRAL,*

BEFORE THE

RIGHT WORSHIPFUL

## *JAMES HUDSON, ESQ. MAYOR,*

AND THE

## Corporation of Norwich,

On TUESDAY, June 17, 1794,

# BEING GUILD DAY.

BY THE

*Rev. JOHN PEELE, M. A.*

MINISTER OF ST. PETER OF MANCROFT.

*NORWICH:*

PRINTED AT THE NORFOLK PRESS, BY J. CROUSE AND W. STEVENSON.

1794.

BRITISH MUSEUM

# NORWICH.

*AT the firſt Court of Mayoralty of JAMES HUDSON, Eſq. Mayor of the ſaid City of Norwich, held the 18th day of June, 1794,*

*ORDERED, That the Thanks of this Court be given to the Rev. JOHN PEELE, Miniſter of St. Peter of Mancroft, for the many Public Diſcourſes which he has delivered before the Corporation of this City, wherein the ſeveral duties which tend to form the character of a virtuous citizen and a good ſubject have been elucidated and enforced with learning and judgment, with energy and perſpicuity, and an affectionate concern for the moſt important intereſts of mankind—*

*And that he be requeſted to print the Sermon he preached on the 17th inſt. being Guild Day.*

*Alſo, that Mr. Deputy Mayor, Robert Harvey, Eſq. Nathaniel Roe, Eſq. Robert Partridge, Eſq. Elias Norgate, Eſq. and John Patteſon, Eſq. be deſired to wait upon Mr. Peele with the above reſolution and requeſt.*

*By the Court,*

DE HAGUE.

TO THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL

# JAMES HUDSON, Esq. MAYOR,

AND THE

## *COURT OF ALDERMEN*

OF THE

## City of Norwich,

THIS DISCOURSE IS INSCRIBED,

BY

THEIR MOST OBEDIENT, HUMBLE SERVANT,

*JOHN PEELE.*

☞ *THIS Discourse meets the public eye only in compliance with the request of a set of Gentlemen, to whom the writer of it was desirous rather to pay such deference as he thought due, than to be determined by his own judgment. He has to thank his audience for the candour with which it was heard, when delivered; and he hopes for the like indulgence from those, who shall give themselves the trouble of perusing it.*

A

# SERMON.

ST. JOHN, c. XIX. v. 4.

*"Pilate therefore went forth again and ſaith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him."*

THE ſeveral circumſtances attending our Saviour's Crucifixion are recorded, with very little difference, by every one of the four Evangeliſts—It was neceſſary that this important event, ſo cloſely connected with the intereſts of Chriſtianity, ſhould be very particularly related, and the whole hiſtory given in detail, that the malice of the accuſers, the innocence of the accuſed, the intemperance of the Jewiſh people, toge-

ther with the injuſtice of the irreſolute Governor, might be clearly underſtood. Judæa was a conquered country, in ſubjection to the Romans, and Pilate ruled it with delegated authority under Tiberius Cæſar. His duty was to preſide over this province; to ſee juſtice regularly adminiſtered; that the people intruſted to his care enjoyed their rights, and behaved themſelves in a peaceable manner. How Pilate executed the truſt committed to him, we may collect from his conduct towards our Saviour, and from what Joſephus* has ſaid concerning him.—This Hiſtorian relates, that, in derogation of the Jewiſh law†, their Governor cauſed military ſtandards, which bore the image of Cæſar, to be introduced by night into Jeruſalem—an attempt which none of his predeceſſors had made. Now the ſtrict attachment of the Jews to that command of God, which prohibits their making or worſhipping any graven images, was well known. They were deeply affected by this inſult upon their religion, and earneſtly requeſted that the emblems of idolatry might not remain in the city—When theſe importunate ſuppliants were threatened with death, they fell to the ground, offered their necks to the ſurrounding ſoldiers, and boldly declared, that they had rather die, than diſobey

* De bell. Jud. lib. II. c. ix. † Antiq. Jud. lib. XVIII. c. v.

their

their laws—This fortitude made an impreſſion on Pilate: He relented, and the images were removed. He could not, however, on any principles be juſtified: he had nothing to do with their religious tenets: if theſe men were faithful to the civil government, the adminiſtration of which was committed to his care, they had a right to protection and the peaceable exerciſe of their religion—This inſtance of Pilate's behaviour, therefore, does not recommend him for his wiſdom or diſcretion—Nor will the Magiſtrate be more entitled to approbation, if we conſider his conduct, when our Saviour was carried before him: the Governor enquires of him, whether he was the King of the Jews, to which he anſwers, thou ſayeſt it: various accuſations were brought againſt him; no reply being made, Pilate expreſſes his amazement, yet he knew that Jeſus was delivered up for envy. So when the multitude, at the inſtigation of the chief Prieſts and Elders, demanded Barabbas to be releaſed, he wanted to know, what he was to do with Him, whom they called the King of the Jews; a queſtion ſurely there was no occaſion to aſk, had he been diſpoſed to do juſtice—Their cry was, let him be crucified: he expoſtulates with them, Why? what evil hath he done? Their clamour was the greater; and

then

then when he ſaw that he could prevail nothing, but rather a tumult was made, he took water and waſhed his hands before the multitude, ſaying, I am innocent of the blood of this juſt perſon; as if water and ſuch a declaration could purify a guilty conſcience—The Jews aſſailed their Governor with a formidable pretence, when they charged our Saviour with perverting the nation, and declared, that if he let this man go, he was not Cæſar's friend, yet he had told them, that no fault was found in this man, either by himſelf or Herod, touching the things whereof they accuſed him—The tumultuous populace indeed exclaimed, if he were not a malefactor we would not have delivered him up—What! was a Magiſtrate to give implicit credit to every thing the accuſers were pleaſed to ſay? The Roman Judge underſtood his duty better, though he wanted either courage or integrity to act up to the obligations of it. He propoſed no leſs than three times to releaſe Chriſt with an uniform declaration of his innocence, yet at length yielded to the voice of his calumniators. Why he did not exert his authority in favour of a perſon, againſt whom no crime had been proved—why he ſtood in awe of the Jews, and was ſo obſequious to their clamour, does not fully

appear

appear from ſcripture. But his conduct forbids us to aſcribe to him the character of an equitable ruler and an honeſt man; and he ſeems to have been deficient in three grand articles eſſential to conſtitute a virtuous and upright Magiſtrate—Wiſdom, Diſcretion and Integrity—of each of theſe qualifications I ſhall ſay ſomething in the following diſcourſe.

By Wiſdom, here, I do not mean the knowledge of abſtract ſcience; the furniture of a ſcholar's mind; nor an acquaintance with the principles of trade and commerce; nor ſkill in the mechanic arts—but ſtrong good ſenſe, with a diſpoſition to obſerve the common occurrences of life, which lead to the knowledge of the world: an inſight into the cuſtoms and manners of mankind; their habits and propenſities; the gift of ſeeing the capacity of men for this or that purpoſe, as well as their moral turn; from whence the ends they aim at, as alſo the means they will probably employ, may be foreſeen without much danger of incurring the charge of raſh judgment. Habits of attentive thinking; ſteady and cloſe obſervations; incidental remarks upon peculiarities of conduct, will, generally ſpeaking, lead to ſuch diſcoveries, as juſtify us in calling men

wiſe, or the contrary.—Without a careful attention to the perſons and things we are concerned with, we cannot accurately determine, what ought to be done or omitted by us—It is by obſervation and activity, that thoſe talents, which God has given us, become uſeful.—Unleſs our faculties are applied to the practical purpoſes of life, we can ſeldom judge correctly of what is paſſing in it, as without ſomething of habitual ſagacity in the obſerver, characters would be confounded—The proud and the humble, the malicious and the meek, the prodigal and the prudent, the cenſorious and the candid, might be treated alike, and little diſcrimination be made between thoſe who deſerve reproach, and thoſe to whom commendation is due. Now, whoever acts in this deſultory manner in common life can never be honoured with the diſtinction of Wiſdom, much leſs can he claim this excellence, ſhould he be called to any office of truſt, or advanced into the poſt of Magiſtracy—In this reſpectable ſtation he becomes the guardian of publick virtue: his duty is to watch with circumſpection over the behaviour of thoſe, who come within his cogniſance: his official employment is to ſee, that the barriers of morality are not over-leaped by the members of the community, which he has

undertaken

undertaken to protect: he is to trace out cauſes and diſcover connections, which might eſcape unnoticed by a leſs ſcrutinizing eye; and he is frequently called upon to detect, through various windings, the motives for any immoral conduct, from the very firſt riſe of wicked conceptions, to the time, when they have burſt forth into actions offenſive to the laws, and demanded the interpoſition of the Magiſtrate. The wiſdom of ſuch an obſerving mind will be enabled to ſearch out the inducements to ſuſpicious actions, and become highly uſeful in reſtraining thoſe evils, which fraud and diſhoneſty might otherwiſe engender. But the uſefulneſs of this talent of Wiſdom will be greatly improved, if joined to another qualification mentioned, and that is, Prudence or Diſcretion.

Now, though it is the duty of all Magiſtrates to enforce obedience to the laws, and to ſee violations of them properly puniſhed, (and it is for this purpoſe, that they are honoured with ſo important a truſt) yet there is a certain latitude allowable, and in the uſe of this, great diſcretion is required—There is a ſpecies of decorum to be obſerved in executing any office whatever, and this muſt be regulated by the circumſtances

ariſing

ariſing on the occaſion. If theſe be not carefully attended to, the keen eye of cenſure and the foul voice of ſlander may pretend to diſcover flaws of conduct, which, though ſtrictly ſpeaking, they cannot impeach a man for criminality, may yet be the foundation of charging him with indiſcretion; and this may derogate from his character, and become the means of abridging his power of doing good. The patience of a Magiſtrate muſt frequently be ſeverely tried by the evaſions and ſubterfuges of hardened ſinners, who hope to conceal the truth and eſcape diſcovery, and experience of ſuch baſe manners will ſometimes hardly fail to provoke indignation, in the meekeſt breaſt: but ſhould a Magiſtrate unguardedly ſhew himſelf ſuſceptible of paſſion, inſtead of proceeding coolly in his enquiries after truth, indifferent ſpectators will be impreſſed with ideas of his tranſgreſſing the bounds of prudence; and though his proceedings on the whole be ever ſo juſt and upright, yet the purity of his conduct will in ſome degree be tainted by the indiſcretion mixed along with it—So in executing laws, which injoin certain penalties for certain crimes, there are frequently diſcretionary powers intruſted to the Magiſtrate, in confidence that they will be exerciſed according to the demerit of the offender,

offender. Here, though he will not permit his compaſſion ſo far to interpoſe as to retard or render void the operation of law: yet, if he either find the caſe doubtful, or that the end aimed at by puniſhment can be obtained without applying penalties in their utmoſt rigour, it is his duty to incline to the ſide of mercy. In ſuch caſes, the gentleſt manner is always the diſcreeteſt. But whenever neceſſity urges him to become the active inſtrument of ſupporting the dignity and power of the laws, diſcretion will then teach him to be reſolute and peremptory in ſeeing them executed. Then mercy to individuals would be cruelty to thoſe numerous members of ſociety whoſe behaviour is regular and unoffending—Indiſcreet lenity tends to the relaxation of manners, and is ultimately deſtructive of public, as well as private, ſecurity and peace. A Magiſtrate is certainly doing a good work, as long as the power he exerciſes is ſanctioned by law; yet it behoves him to be careful that the good he does be not evil ſpoken of, through his want of diſcretion: and if, in the progreſs of any judicial act, meaſures are not applied to clear up every obſcurity, which prevents the beam of truth from reaching the underſtandings of thoſe who are intereſted in the caſe, he will be chargeable,

though not, perhaps, with injuſtice, yet with indiſcretion—In ſhort, every one, who undertakes to execute the laws, ſhould be careful that his own conduct be without reproach. Further—The order and peace of civil ſociety claim the exacteſt attention of him, who is called to preſide in the diſpenſation of public juſtice; and it is manifeſt, that both local and national police are required to attain ſuch deſirable objects. It muſt therefore be an act of prudence for thoſe in authority to watch the firſt motions and tendency to faction and ſedition; to uſe the beſt means in their power to check all inflammatory converſations, that may be applied to diſturb the minds of the people; to guard againſt the enſnaring attempts of thoſe diſturbers of mankind, who endeavour to ſow diſcord and promote a ſpirit of inſurrection againſt laws, which are made to regulate the behaviour of each member of ſociety—Above all, if any are bold enough to inſult the Magiſtrate's authority, and betray a forwardneſs to irregular and violent proceedings, his duty is to embrace the earlieſt opportunity of ſuppreſſing ſuch inſolence, and ſhewing both the impolicy and wickedneſs of it.—The endeavours of any private perſon to bring exiſting laws into contempt ought not to be allowed, and

ſurely

ſurely they, who guard *the laws* from being infringed or violated, are much better friends to the people than thoſe, who, under the pretence of reſcuing them from real or fictitious grievances, virtually create a rule for themſelves, and renounce thoſe good inſtitutions, which have already been enacted for particular, as well as general ſafety—I ſcarce know by what name ſuch offences ſhould be diſtinguiſhed, but they ſeem to me a ſpecies of treaſon againſt every part of that conſtitution, which has hitherto ſecured to us, and I truſt will continue to ſecure, the deareſt intereſts of life, of liberty and property.

What ſhall we ſay to the temper and manner in which political controverſies have of late been conducted? To the ſcheme of aſſuming ſelf created power, and the habit of adopting the affected language of a people, who, inſtead of reforming, have overturned their Government, and are now exerciſing the moſt abſolute deſpotiſm? Licentiouſneſs, cloaking itſelf under the name of Liberty, calls for effectual controul; for uncontrouled, it can end in nothing but civil commotions, at the very thought of which ſurely the heart of every

honeſt

honeſt Briton muſt recoil with horror—Should God, in his vengeance, ſuffer ſuch a calamity to overtake us, as a juſt puniſhment for our ſins, then real grievances and oppreſſions would indeed be felt, far different from thoſe, with which we hear our ſuperiors frequently charged; as if they wantonly exerciſed their power over their fellow ſubjects, without regarding the diſtreſſes under which they labour.—Now it is not to be doubted, that a great deal of this pernicious talk is thrown out in the way of vague ſlander; yet, if injuries be committed, and they can be brought home to particular perſons, as the authors of them, let ſuch, in God's name, anſwer for the abuſes they have been guilty of: but it is moſt unfair to encourage groundleſs calumnies, and ſupport the invention of diſcontented perſons, inſtead of ſubmitting to the meritorious labour of inveſtigating truth. And though allowances may be made for the raſhneſs and impetuoſity of young men, who are blinded perhaps by the high conceit they entertain of their own wiſdom, and whoſe judgments therefore, moſt probably, are not ripe enough to diſtinguiſh between right and wrong, in matters of Legiſlation and practicable Government; and ſuch may be entitled to compaſſion for their errors; yet,

ſurely,

ſurely, it is moſt diſgraceful, that men, advanced in life, men otherwiſe diſcreet, and, in their general conduct, deſerving commendation, and conſtantly experiencing the bleſſings of a well-framed Government, ſhould be ſo far tranſported beyond the bounds of ſobriety and duty, as to raiſe ſuſpicions, propagate inſinuations, and bring charges, without proof, againſt their ſuperiors, whoſe zeal for the public good, it would be unreaſonable to ſuppoſe, inferior to their own, and who, we truſt, are employing their time and thoughts for the preſervation of every thing that deſerves to be held dear and ſacred by us.

The condition of human life is ſuch, that no man can expect to be exempted from common misfortunes—Each man, in the gradations of ſociety, muſt partake, more or leſs, of them—Each man muſt have his ſhare, and each man ſhould conſider his neighbour, of every deſcription, as a fellow-ſufferer with himſelf, either in the calamities which befal his country at large, or thoſe which affect his own more contracted neighbourhood. In the natural body, St. Paul ob-

 ſerves,

ſerves, very juſtly, if one Member ſuffers, or is honoured, all the members ſuffer or rejoice with it—The ſame happens in the ſyſtem of the body politic. Every ſcene of public confuſion diffuſes miſchief through all the channels of ſocial life. The only remedy either to cure thoſe evils which exiſt, or to prevent thoſe which are apprehended, is for virtuous and good men chearfully to unite in all ſuch meaſures to avert misfortunes, as reaſon and religion will warrant, and then, if not ſucceſsful, to bear them with chriſtian patience and fortitude.

The laſt qualification in a good Magiſtrate, of which I mean to take notice, is Integrity—

Better directions for poſſeſſing this excellent virtue cannot be produced, than thoſe given by Jethro to Moſes. Hearken, ſays he, to my voice, and I will give thee council, and God ſhall be with thee. Thou ſhalt provide out of the people able men; ſuch as fear God; men of truth, hating covetouſneſs, and let them judge the people at all ſeaſons. Similar to this

was

was the injunction which Moſes afterwards gave to the Judges of Iſrael—Hear the cauſes between your brethren, and judge rightly between every man and his brother, and the ſtranger that is with him: ye ſhall not reſpect perſons in judgment, but ye ſhall hear the ſmall as well as the great; ye ſhall not be afraid of the face of man, for the judgment is God's—Here we have the elementary and conſtituent parts of this great and uſeful virtue, Integrity; and by obſerving the rules here laid down, every one, who is called to the office of Magiſtracy, will be enabled to diſcharge his duty moſt effectually. His conduct will then reſt upon a firm foundation; the fear of God, and, of courſe, the genuine love of truth, will always preſide in his heart. He will not be led into error by baſe, narrow, or ſelfiſh connections: he will be cautious and deliberate in all his proceedings, nor ſuffer his patience to be exhauſted, till he has finiſhed the buſineſs, in which he is called upon to interpoſe, as ſucceſsfully as the nature of the caſe will admit, whether it be to inflict puniſhment, or reconcile contending parties, and heal the wounds occaſioned by ſtrife and animoſity. Such an upright man fears not cenſure: he courts not applauſe;

plauſe: his mind is not poiſoned with the diſgraceful ambition of loving the praiſe of men more than the praiſe of God. But in all matters, great or ſmall, which come before him, he is anxious, that every cloud raiſed to obſcure the truth may vaniſh, and public juſtice, to the parties who appeal for judgment, be impartially diſpenſed. Such is the man of Integrity: his righteouſneſs he will hold faſt, and will not let it go: he is determined, that his heart ſhall not reproach him, ſo long as he lives.

In an age, not eminent for its abſtinence from vicious practices, the neceſſity of having wiſe and virtuous Governors, and the benefits derived from them, muſt be obvious to every ſerious mind. Hear what the Son of Sirach ages ago obſerved—As the Judge of the People is, ſo are his officers, and what manner of man the ruler of the city is, ſuch are they that dwell therein—The general doctrine he meaned to inculcate was the happy influence of good example.

Let

Let ſuch, then, as voluntarily engage to execute the laws, look upon themſelves as under the ſtricteſt obligations of conſcience to let their light ſhine before men, and be careful, that no ſuſpicion of any converſation, unbecoming the Goſpel of Chriſt, be juſtly created by them—Let them, by all means, avoid being guilty of ſuch offences as their duty calls upon them to puniſh in others; elſe they will not only diſgrace the character they aſſume, but become worſe than uſeleſs to a community, whoſe welfare they have pledged themſelves moſt ſolemnly to promote. Let them give evidence of their adherence to that heavenly ſyſtem of morality, comprized in the ten commandments, and enjoined by the authority of our bleſſed Saviour, which is at once the foundation of the pureſt virtue, and the ſource of all private and public happineſs—May the people, beholding ſuch examples, profit by a zeal to imitate them; and God Almighty grant that a general reformation of manners, which is ſo much to be deſired, may take place in our own days, and in our own nation; that both they, whoſe province it is to govern, and they, whoſe duty it is to obey, may unite in their ſubmiſſion to the laws, the very beſt ſecurity for general liberty and protection, and ſo promote, as

far as in them lies, the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another; that in this place, more particularly, diſcord and enmity may ceaſe, and that, upon every occaſion, we may be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; for though there are a thouſand reaſons why we cannot all of us think alike; yet there is not one good reaſon why we ſhould be angry with each other; why we ſhould revile and perſecute, and invade the peace of one another on that account—This, we know, our bleſſed Maſter abſolutely forbids, and from the conſcientious practice of his moſt holy religion are we alone entitled to expect God's bleſſing upon our labours, and to be qualified for enjoying either preſent happineſs, or partaking of future glory.

*FINIS.*

21 AP 65